



Education Watch

Enhancing Flexibility & Accountability ■ Leaving No Child Behind

U.S. House Education & the Workforce Committee ■ John Boehner, Chairman
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October 4, 2001

President Bush Creates Commission to Study IDEA Reforms

President Bush has established a commission to study ways to improve and reform special education programs. The commission will report its recommendations to Congress by April 30, 2002.

The commission will study how federal resources can best be used to improve educational results for students with disabilities as well as how early intervention in reading instruction impacts the referral and identification of children for special education services.

Early and accurate identification of students with learning disabilities is critically important as Congress moves to reauthorize and reform the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) next year. Under IDEA's current structure, minority children are over-identified for special education. Some children are being diagnosed as needing IDEA services simply because they did not receive proper early reading instruction.

Secretary of Education Rod Paige, who has led the Bush Administration's calls for meaningful reform of IDEA on behalf of disabled students, reiterated the Administration's concerns about problems with the current IDEA system in testimony before the Education & the Workforce today.

"Our system fails to teach many children fundamental skills like reading and then inappropriately identifies some of them as having disabilities. Not only does this hurt those children who are misidentified, it also reduces the resources available to serve children with disabilities. If we provide all children with scientifically-based reading instruction delivered by well-trained teachers, many will never need special education."

Message of the Day

America's special education system is in need of reform.

- ❑ *The Bush Reading First initiative will help ensure that more children receive effective instruction.*
- ❑ *It will also reduce the cost burden on all levels of government as fewer children are diagnosed as needing IDEA services simply because they did not receive proper reading instruction.*
- ❑ *President Bush has proposed a billion-dollar increase in IDEA funding, but IDEA must be reformed so that this money is spent effectively for those disabled children who need it most.*

DAILY EDUCATION FACTS

- A recent University of Michigan study found that more than 20 percent of U.S. first-graders have severe reading difficulties. Of those children, nearly 3 in 4 are likely to remain poor readers. More than 10 million American children have trouble reading, the study found. (Laurence McQuillan, *USA Today*, July 26, 2001)
- Under H.R. 1, states participating in the Reading First program will have the option to receive "Early Reading First" funding to implement proven, research-based reading programs in Head Start and existing pre-school programs that will improve early and accurate identification of reading problems.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"[W]e must develop a better understanding of the reasons minority students are mislabeled at such disproportionate rates," said Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA), noting that *"solving the problems of over-representation of minority students will require a comprehensive systemic approach."* **Education & the Workforce Committee hearing, October 4, 2001**